

flee their homes ahead of the inferno, the Tribes immediately offered up the parking lot the Klamath Casino for their use.

When the firefighters tasked with containing the fire needed a massive open space to stage their ample equipment, those same expansive parking lots were readily provided to them.

At the same time, the doors of their hotel were thrown open to anyone displaced by the fire, to Tribal and non-Tribal members alike who were in need of shelter. In the middle of a pandemic, with all manner of precautions in place to keep folks healthy and safe, that was no easy feat, but they did it, all while also welcoming the Red Cross inside to set up a response center, as well.

As the forests burned around it, the Klamath Casino stood there like the eye of a hurricane. It became a center of help and healing, of safety and shelter. Had they just done those things, the Klamath Tribes would have already gone far above and beyond to support Tribal members and community members alike. They didn't stop, however, with providing the use of their hotel and its facilities to first responders and to those in need.

No. Klamath Tribal Behavioral Health went out and provided assistance and services to anyone who had been affected and displaced, free of charge. Whether they were Tribal members or not, it didn't matter. Those who needed help were able to get it. They helped feed the firefighters risking their lives fighting the infernos, emergency volunteers helping others, and even evacuees.

And even now, some 5 months after the worst of the fire's carnage, the Klamath Tribes are still doing what they can to help those whose lives were turned upside down by it. A GoFundMe account has been set up to help any family who lost their home or their property to the Two Four Two Fire rebuild and start to get back up on their feet again. The distribution of the money raised by the account is still a work in progress. The Tribes are fine-tuning the priority system and how folks will apply for it. But once all of that is worked out, this is going to be a tremendous help to so many of our friends and neighbors who have endured such heartbreak and hardship.

"We help each other; We will live good." There is no question that the members of the Klamath Tribes have helped those in need across southern Oregon through an unimaginably difficult time. We are all deeply grateful for everything they have done, both during the Two Four Two Fire and afterward. And we will all be better off as a State and as a community because of their kindness and generosity of spirit.●

RECOGNIZING GENEVA'S SHEAR PERFECTION BARBER & BEAUTY SALON

● Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, this month our country is joining together in celebration of Black History Month. It is a month for all of us to recognize the indescribable impact that Black Americans have left made on our Nation; to recommit ourselves to the struggle to achieve and ensure racial justice throughout our land; and, of course, to celebrate Black culture and all of its contributions to America past, present, and future. Few institutions are more connected or have been more central to Black culture than the barbershop and beauty salon. As described by the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, for generations, men and women have been going to these businesses not just for hair care, but for the sense of community and security they provide. Black Americans go to spend time among peers, playing cards or chess, sharing the latest local news and engaging in passionate debates about politics. Men and women go in to these businesses for friendship and mentorship and to be engaged in the affairs of their neighbors and their community.

For 30 years, this was particularly true of Geneva's Shear Perfection Barber & Beauty Salon in northeast Portland. Since opening its doors in 1991, Geneva's has been a hub for Portland's African-American community, welcoming over 1,000 people through its doors every month. Folks from Michael Jordan and Muhammed Ali, to members of the Portland Trailblazers, sat in its chairs. But more importantly, it stood as the heart for three generations of Black Portlanders who first walked through Geneva's doors as children with their parents and then went on to bring their own sons and daughters for their first haircuts, even as the area around this local institution underwent the kind of gentrification that pushed Black families further and further away.

But it wasn't only the barbershop itself that is considered an institution of the Portland community—so is the Knauls family who owned and operated it for three decades. Geneva Knauls, who passed away in 2014, was our State's first Black female barber. Throughout her years as a businesswoman, Geneva supported all different kinds of local grassroots projects and organizations, and become one of the most beloved people in the northeast Portland community. Her status is only equaled by her husband's, Mr. Paul Knauls, Sr., who is affectionately known around town as the Mayor of Northeast Portland. From 1963 to 1970, Mr. Knauls owned and ran the Cotton Club, which was the place for jazz and soul music, welcoming such big names as Etta James, Big Mama Thornton, and Sammy Davis, Jr., to its stage to serenade music-loving Portlanders. He sold the Cotton Club in 1970 and went

on to open a series of others throughout town before finally opening Geneva's. All the while, throughout all of his business adventures, Paul has been active in other ways throughout the community. He worked with the Junior Achievement Program at both Humboldt and Jefferson schools, tutored in the HOSTS—Help One Student to Succeed—program at King School, and served for 6 years on the board of the Urban League.

Last year, Mr. Knauls and his son, Paul Jr., decided it was finally time to take a break and close the doors of Geneva's. It was also a decision made out of a recognition of the difficult new realities of trying to operate a personal care business in the midst of an unprecedented national and global pandemic. Sadly, the Knauls and Geneva's are not alone. Many businesses have been forced to confront life amid the COVID pandemic and BIPOC-owned businesses and communities have been disproportionately impacted. Last year's announcement of the closure of Geneva's Shear Perfection Barber & Beauty Salon was understandably met with an emotional outpouring from local Portlanders. Men and women who had been going to the shop their entire lives took to the shop's Facebook page to thank the Knauls family for their contributions to the community and to share some fond memories. Statements came from local leaders and celebrities touting Geneva's legacy, as one person put it, as "one of the most important examples of a black business that represented more to the community than just a place to get a haircut."

And a year after its closing, that legacy continues to endure. Geneva's Facebook page is brimming with pictures of young men in graduation robes in front of the salon, of a turkey giveaway in its parking lot that took place this past Thanksgiving to help provide for families in need, and announcements from other local Black business owners who are moving into the space to continue the Knauls family's entrepreneurial spirit. And the legacy of "The Mayor" and his iconic standing in the community remains as strong today as it ever has; even after celebrating Mr. Knauls' 90th birthday age and the pandemic have not stopped Paul Knauls, Sr., from putting on two masks to go out for daily walks in his neighborhood and around the Lloyd Center. For his 90th birthday last month, the nonprofit World Arts Foundation streamed a live storytelling event, featuring decades of friends, employees, and admirers to help him celebrate.

I know that Portlanders everywhere will join me in expressing the immense gratitude to Geneva's Shear Perfection Barber & Beauty Salon and to the Knauls family for all that they have done for the community. Northeast Portland certainly won't be the same without Geneva's, but everyone who walked through those doors over the last 30 years has had their lives

touched and impacted by it in ways both big and small. And it is reassuring to know that, through each of them, Geneva's legacy, the legacy of the Black barbershop and salon, the legacy of community and friendship and looking out for one another, will continue to endure.●

REMEMBERING MEL RICHARD ANTONEN

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I would like to include in the RECORD the following obituary for Mel Antonen, a native South Dakotan and longtime Major League Baseball reporter for USA Today and elsewhere, who passed away on January 30, 2021. He is honored by Charles Raasch, also a native South Dakotan, of USA Today with an obituary upon his death. I extend my deepest sympathy to the Antonen family.

The material follows:

Mel Antonen, family man, friend to the world, and renowned sports journalist, died Saturday of a rare acute auto-immune disease and complications from COVID-19. He was a longtime USA TODAY Sports and MASN-TV baseball reporter who covered nearly three dozen World Series. In a half century in journalism, he reveled and excelled in telling others' stories.

He was 64.

Mel Richard Antonen's own story became the best of all. It began in the tiny town of Lake Norden, South Dakota, on Aug. 25, 1956, when he was the third of four children born to Ray and Valda Antonen.

Lake Norden is 225 miles from the nearest major league ballpark and has never been populated with more than 550 people, but on soft summer evenings fans from counties away congregated at Memorial Park to watch a new episode of South Dakota's storied amateur baseball history. Its pull never left him even as he walked, as a sports journalist, on Boston's hallowed Fenway Park with the late Yankees Hall of Famer Joe DiMaggio, or sat in a pre-game spring training dugout with another Hall of Fame member, Minnesota Twins slugger Harmon Killebrew, weeks before Killebrew died in 2011.

The Antonen family has promoted amateur baseball in Lake Norden for decades. Mel loved to tell how his father, Ray over the years brought to the tiny hometown a series of barnstorming pros, including the legendary Satchel Paige and Cy Young Award winner Jim Perry, to play at Memorial Park. On the mornings of home games throughout his childhood and beyond, Mel, his father and siblings would groom the field, with the rising corn and soybean fields ritually marking the progression of summer beyond the left-field fence.

"I love baseball because it always brings me home," Antonen said at his induction to South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame in 2017. "A baseball park in my mind is a home. It doesn't matter if it's next to a cornfield, as it is in Lake Norden, or if it is next to a rumbling subway, in New York."

At USA TODAY, and later as an analyst for MASN, the network that covers the Washington Nationals and Baltimore Orioles, Antonen "was a very good storyteller who went far beyond balls and strikes and the score of the game," said his retired USA TODAY Sports editor Henry Freeman.

Dan Connolly was among the reporters in the Washington-Baltimore area with whom Antonen was close, as they two sat next to each other in the press box and exchanged good-natured barbs.

"He had such an easy way about him with players and media and staff," Connolly said. "It was one of those things, everyone liked the guy. Everyone. He had a way about him. He could relate to anybody. He was really very smart, and being a South Dakota boy, he was very easy to relate to. I remember him saying that if he didn't go into baseball writers, he wanted to be a Lutheran minister. You could tell Mel anything, he was a pastoral listening-type guy."

Antonen's journalism career began as a kid, when he called in scores from Lake Norden's home games to two newspapers that he ended up writing for: the Watertown (S.D.) Public Opinion, which paid him as a high schooler 15 cents a copy inch; and the Sioux Falls Argus Leader, where he got his first job after graduation from Augustana University, eventually covering the sports, farm and political beats.

He joined USA TODAY in 1986, where one of his earliest assignments was covering the Tonya Harding Olympics figure-skating scandal. Antonen became a MLB reporter and columnist, covering history from Cal Ripken Jr.'s consecutive games streak to the Mark McGwire-Sammy Sosa record-breaking home run race and the steroid scandals that followed. The story he often said was seared most in his memory came during the earthquake-interrupted 1989 World Series. There, sitting in a press box high above San Francisco's Candlestick Park, he watched as the entire stadium undulated dangerously during the destructive Loma Prieta quake. Antonen filed a story, then headed out for days to cover the aftermath, focusing on the human costs.

Hall of Famer Ripken told USA TODAY Sports' Bob Nightengale that Antonen "was a fixture around the game for so many years, and it was clear that he had a passion for baseball. He was a thorough and thoughtful reporter and left his mark on his profession."

Along with the World Series, Antonen covered three Olympics, and professional bowling leagues.

"I can't imagine being anything other than a reporter, an ink-stained wretch," he told his Hall of Fame audience.

Freeman, his editor at USA TODAY's pioneering sports section, said Antonen's knowledge of baseball, reverence for its history, and his love of stories, was evident from the first day.

"It became clear to me right away the understanding he had of baseball, and a lot of that was because of his father," said Freeman.

Freeman said one of his favorite stories involved Antonen at the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson won the 100 meters in world-record time, but failed a drug test, was stripped of his gold medal and ordered to be sent home. USA TODAY received a tip that Johnson had reservations on one of several potential flights out of South Korea, and Freeman immediately sent Antonen to the airport to find Johnson and to do anything necessary to get an interview.

Carrying nothing but a walkie-talkie and his reporter's notebook, Antonen arrived at the airport and quickly discovered that Ben Johnson was booked on a flight to Toronto. Antonen bought a ticket, went aboard and found Ben Johnson—who turned out to be a doctor, decades older than the sprinter by the same name. Antonen turned failure into a memorable human interest story about the frantic hunt through Olympics high-security obstacles that ended with the wrong Ben Johnson.

"It was a non-story that he made a good story of its own," Freeman said. "It also showed the lengths that Mel would go to get a good story."

Using persistence and personality, Antonen scored a rare interview with the notoriously press-shy DiMaggio, late in the legend's life, after learning that DiMaggio was in Boston for a special event at Fenway Park. The man considered "ungettable" by many sports journalists talked for several hours with Antonen, and they finished with a stroll in front of the Green Monster. DiMaggio "loved the history of baseball," Antonen years later told the Argus-Leader.

He was a sports broadcaster for MASN's Mid-Atlantic Sports Report, and radio analyst on Sirius-XM in the last decade of his career, and also wrote for Sports Illustrated and other publications. He did a radio interview on the baseball Hall of Fame voting from his hospital bed less than a week before his death. He especially loved talking baseball with long-haul truckers on his late-night satellite radio show.

Antonen's mother died when he was 12. His father, himself enshrined in the South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame, raised Mel and his sisters, Kathy and Carmen, and brother, Rusty, with the field at Memorial Park becoming a refuge.

"My life reflects the power of baseball," he said in that 2017 speech. "One of my earliest memories of Lake Norden baseball was the summer of 1969. . . . In March of that year my mom died after a year-long battle with cancer. But it was baseball, and Lake Norden baseball, with hot dogs and a 10-cent glass of pop and chasing batting-practice foul balls on a beautiful summer night, that created a diversion from fearful images of three months prior—(of) my mom's tan casket, crying adults, the hearse in front of Trinity Lutheran, on an overcast subzero day, when there were piles of snow in one of South Dakota's worst winters."

Antonen kept reporting and writing throughout his illness with COVID-19 and an auto-immune disease so rare that his doctors told him he may have been the only person on Earth with that combination.

Months after being diagnosed with both diseases, Mel scored an interview with Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert and big baseball fan, who talked about the need for caution, but also hope, in a pandemic. "You've got to go on with your life, but that doesn't mean you have to deprive yourself of all the pleasures" Fauci told him.

Antonen's final column for MASN, written after the Dodgers won the World Series in October, paid homage to the comforting and reassuring next-year ritual of baseball. It ended this way: "World Series 2021 prediction: The Padres in six over the White Sox."

Mel Richard Antonen is survived by his son, Emmett, 14, and his wife, Lisa Nipp, a photojournalist, whom he married in 2001, along with three siblings and their families. Lisa embraced the many characters in Mel's baseball orbit, once holding the phone for Mel with the crusty, late Hall-of-Fame pitcher Bob Feller by discussing the beauty of hollyhocks.

"From Joe DiMaggio to Dusty Baker and Bryce Harper, I have gotten to meet and interview and become friends with people that baseball fans around the world would love to know," he said in that Hall of Fame speech in South Dakota. "But those experiences only happened because I grew up around people that we should all be lucky to know. The lessons learned here, and on the prairie, have gone with me and worked beautifully. And tonight, baseball brings me home once again."●